

Consideration of the Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Elections in Africa

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Tomorrow (31 January), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is set to convene its 1062nd session to consider among its agenda items, the report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on elections in Africa conducted during the second half of 2021 (July to December 2021).

Following opening remarks by Permanent Representative of Ghana to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for the month, Amma Adomaa Twum-Amoah, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye is expected to make a statement. Representatives of AU member States which conducted elections during the reporting period are also expected to deliver statements.

In line with the request made at its 424th meeting to receive quarterly briefings on national elections conducted in Africa, tomorrow's session is expected to provide updates on elections held in the continent during the second half of 2021 and provide preview of those expected to take place in 2022. The session will follow the previous briefing presented to the Council at its 1034th session where the outcomes of elections held during the period from January to June 2021 were discussed.

The countries that held elections during the reporting period on which the report of the Chairperson is expected to provide update are Cape Verde, Central African Republic (CAR), Ethiopia, Morocco, Sao Tome and Principe, The Gambia and

Zambia. Only in Sao Tome and Principe, where the first round of the presidential elections could not secure a majority vote for any of the candidates, was a second round of elections held. AU election observer mission was deployed to nearly all of these member States. During the reporting period, in addition to the deployment of short-term election observations the AU has also contributed through the provision of technical and financial support to election management bodies and other relevant actors (in The Gambia and Somalia); undertaking multidimensional needs assessment missions (to Chad, Mali and The Gambia) and deployment of preventive diplomacy missions (to Zambia and The Gambia) as indicated in the Chairperson's report.

Somalia and Libya were the other two AU member States that were scheduled to organise and conduct both presidential and parliamentary elections in the second half of 2021. While Somalia was able to complete the election for members of the upper house of parliament (the House of the People) by mid-November 2021, the election of members of the lower house, who will in turn be in charge of electing the president jointly with members of the upper house, is still underway. As of 9 January 2022, Somalia's leaders have reached agreement to complete the ongoing election of lower house members of parliament by 25 February 2022.

Following the signing of the 2020 Ceasefire Agreement, one of the main strides achieved in Libya was the determination of a timeline for general elections, which were scheduled to take place on 24 December 2021. A major precondition for the successful organisation of the elections was the completion of the constitutional framework and electoral laws well ahead of the agreed timeline. It is also to be recalled that at its 997th ministerial session, the PSC welcomed the agreement reached to organise the national elections and requested the AU Commission to deploy AU election observation mission to Libya. However, due to the growing disagreement over legal

procedures and the delay in the finalization of list of candidates, the general elections were postponed to 2022. With the new proposed date of 24 January becoming untenable to hold elections, after consultations with presidential hopefuls the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General told reporters that it is very reasonable and possible for Libyans to cast their votes in June 2022.

Chad's legislative elections, originally scheduled for 13 December 2020 and later postponed for 24 October 2021, were also indefinitely postponed.

Together with the delayed elections in Libya and Somalia, some fourteen AU member states are scheduled to hold presidential and/or parliamentary elections during 2022. Apart from Libya and Somalia, others that also face uncertainties about the timing of elections include Mali and Guinea. Mali's general elections, which were scheduled for 27 February 2022, may experience delays as the transitional government has recently announced a new electoral roadmap. Given the challenging political and security context, Mali's transition through the conduct of peaceful and democratic elections will benefit from the AU's close follow up and timely support including through high-level engagement with relevant Malian stakeholders.

In line with the 6 months' timetable established by the regional body Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) following Guinea's military coup of 5 September 2021, Guinea is also expected to conduct general elections in March 2022. While Guinea's transitional government has finalised the formation of the National Transitional Council (CNT) – the body that determines the electoral calendar, the transitional authorities have already indicated more time may be required for constitutional review and institutional reforms, which makes it unlikely for the elections to be held within the timeline established by ECOWAS.

Some of the other expected elections upcoming in 2022 include

the Gambia's legislative elections which are scheduled to take place in the first half of the year as well as Kenya's and Angola's general elections planned for the second half of 2022. As in the past, Kenya's election is expected to attract particular interest, including in terms of requiring diplomatic measures to ensure that the elections are free from violence and conditions for the acceptance of the outcome of elections by candidates are created.

In addition to elaborating on the elections conducted during the reporting period and providing highlights on upcoming elections, the Chairperson's report is also expected to capture key emerging trends in Africa's electoral and political governance. In that regard, the winning of presidential elections in Zambia, Cape Verde, and Sao Tome and Principe, and the securing of majority parliamentary seats in Morocco by opposition parties is a noteworthy progress that may be emphasised in the report. Similarly, a notable decrease in election-related violence, increase in self-funding of elections by respective member States and improved technical management of elections are some of the positive trends that may also be highlighted. As underscored in the Chairperson's report, there was also a significant increase in voter turnout during the reporting period which is a change from the previous report that indicated about voter apathy as trend that dominated elections in Africa. This development is also indicative of the promotion of popular participation in elections which is an important aspect of democratic processes as stressed by the PSC at its 713th session.

A rather worrying trend that may be reflected is the growing postponement or continuity of postponement of elections in multiple member States despite the commendable commitment to electoral calendars in a number of other member States. Other concerning trends that Council may be briefed about include the increase in hate speech and misinformation, inadequate public services and corruption, intense political tension and

instances of election-related violence and resurgence in unconstitutional changes of government.

The expected outcome of the session is a communiqué. The PSC may commend all those countries that concluded their elections without major problems and congratulate countries in which the opposition won elections and smooth transfer of power took place. Council may reaffirm its total rejection of unconstitutional changes of government and express its full support for the democratic will of citizens as expressed through free, fair and credible elections. The PSC may also condemn the extension of term limits through flawed constitutional processes which is also triggering popular discontent and protest and eroding the legitimacy of governments. In light of the increasing misuse of social media and the cyber space to spread misinformation specially during election periods, Council may call on member States to continuously engage their citizens by providing credible and factual information in relation to electoral processes and sensitize their citizens to increase their active and informed participation. It may also call on member States with unduly delayed elections to ensure that political actors commit to agreed electoral calendar and elections are held per such agreement to avoid the uncertainty and crisis of legitimacy that delay in the conduct of elections leads to. The Council may also welcome and commend the efforts of the PAPS Department for introducing to the AU election observation system a gender and youth balanced composition of observer missions, an Experts Advisory Panel as well as better interaction between the AU and Regional Economic Communities/ Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) in monitoring elections. Commending the AU Commission for the support provided to member States which conducted elections during the reporting period, Council may appeal to the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) to allocate increased financial resources to the AU Commission for the continued support in the continent's electoral processes.